

Eliciting behavior change of citizens to combat COVID-19 in Japan through use of behavioral insights



Behavioral Sciences Team
for a better choice

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Behavioral Sciences Team (BEST) – Japan's nationwide challenge

➤ Established

- In April 2017 on the initiative of Japan's Ministry of the Environment

➤ Mission

- Help people make better choices by guiding their own autonomous decisions w/o stress in a personalized way, preserving freedom of choice

➤ Objectives

- Implement rigorous impact evaluation and evidence-based policymaking (EBPM) & practice (EBP) by keeping transparency and accountability
- Disseminate effective behavioral approaches that supplement traditional policy measures in both public and private sectors
- Make the behavioral approaches take root locally by creating a win-win-win situation for all stakeholders



Basic Strategy to combat COVID-19 in Japan

<Overall Goal>


Maximization of suppression of transmission and Minimization of socio-economic damage

1. Early detection of and early response to clusters
2. Early patient diagnosis and enhancement of intensive care and the securing of a medical service system for the severely ill
3. **Behavior change of citizens**
 - To avoid high risk environment
 - To take basic disease-prevention measures including hand washing and disinfection
 - To increase resistance with a balanced diet, moderate exercise, rest and sleep etc.

Important notice for preventing COVID-19 outbreaks.

Avoid the "Three Cs"!

1. **Closed spaces** with poor ventilation.
2. **Crowded places** with many people nearby.
3. **Close-contact settings** such as close-range conversations.




One of the key measures against COVID-19 is to prevent clusters. Keep these "Three Cs" from overlapping in daily life.

High risk environment

The risk of occurrence of clusters is particularly high when the "Three Cs" overlap!

In addition to the "Three Cs," items used by multiple people should be cleaned with disinfectant.



首相官邸 Prime Minister's Office of Japan | 厚生労働省 Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare | MHLW COVID-19 Search | QR code

Behavioral insights to promote hand washing and disinfection

- Previously, the rubbing alcohol was placed at the height of eyes at the entrance of rooms in the Ministry of the Environment in order to make it easy to find it.
- **An arrow tape has been placed to make it easier for people to notice** the rubbing alcohol. **Message to show gratitude for cooperation** has also been added.
- According to a difference-in-difference experiment, the consumption of alcohol **increased three-fold** by the installation of the tape on March 2020.



At the entrance of a room
in the Ministry of the Environment

Behavioral insights to promote hand washing and disinfection (2)



Uji City, Kyoto Pref

Arrow to indicate alcohol

- **An arrow tape** has been placed on the floor to **make it easier for people to notice** the rubbing alcohol at the entrance to the city hall of Uji City.
- The number of users **increased by approx. 10%** compared to before the installation.
- Following the example of Uji City, other municipalities are developing similar initiatives.



Shinjuku Gyoen,
Ministry of the Environment

- **Nudge message encouraging soap hand washing** is displayed on the toilet vanity in a national garden (Shinjuku Gyoen) based on a UK study*.
- **Message to show gratitude for cooperation** is also added.

(*) source : Judah *et al.* *Am J Public Health.* 2009;99:S405-S411.

Behavioral insights to maintain physical distancing (1)



- Hiketa elementary and junior high school in Kagawa Prefecture **uses its local product** named “Hiketa buri” or yellowtail to encourage students to recognize the distance of two meters to maintain physical distancing.
- **They say “I-buri-buri-you” with a happy melody.** It is because the length of adult yellowtail is about a meter, which **all the citizens in the city know.**
- **Other municipalities can customize this case** by substituting yellowtail by their own local products.



Behavioral insights to maintain physical distancing (2)

- Resona Bank, Ltd has **placed plush toys on some sheets** in the waiting room. Customers are able to **maintain physical distancing**.



Behavioral insights to organize lines and ease congestion

- Previously, automated ticket vending machines for the general public and manned booths for discounted visitors to check their IDs were **separated by color** in a national garden.
- Before the cherry blossom viewing season, **guiding tape was placed on the road surface in the colors corresponding to the fees to make it easier to see where to stand in line.**
- In addition to benefiting visitors, **the management of the park has also benefited from improved operations.**



Classification of visitors by color according to fee

Shinjuku Gyoen (*1),
Ministry of the Environment



Behavioral insights to organize lines and ease congestion (2)

- To avoid crowded place with many people nearby and close-contact setting, the number of people who can enter the coffee shop is restricted.
- To go only.
- Blue **guiding tape was placed** on the road surface both at the entrance and near the shop to make it easier to see where to stand in line.



At the entrance



Near the shop

Behavioral insights to organize lines and ease congestion (3)

- You can find similar cases everywhere in Japan.



At the entrance of a post office



In a shopping center

Behavioral insights to avoid droplet infection

- To avoid droplet infection by close-range conversations, passengers are required to stop talking. (*this is not nudge but regulation)
- In order to keep them quiet, posters **clearly indicating what kind of behavior people are required to take** are displaced.



At the elevator hall



Inside an elevator

Behavioral insights to keep social distancing

- To avoid crowded place with many people nearby and close-contact setting, many entities are creating **logos depicting the importance of keeping social distancing.**
- In order to make it easy to understand what kind of behavior people are required to take, a simple, language-independent pictogram might be effective.



Logo by Rakuten, Inc.

Behavioral insights to increase resistance with moderate exercise

- It is of great importance to **eliminate cabin fever and lack of exercise during staying at home** in an emergency situation.
- Dr. Michiya Tanimoto, a Nudge Ambassador appointed by the Behavioral Sciences Team, created a **video named Muscle “Genki” Gymnastics**.
- In gymnastics, you are **empowered with powerful words utilizing behavioral insights**.

